Black community routs NATO parade

NORFOLK, Va., April 29— More than 1,000 anti-imperialist demonstrators from this south-eastern Virginia city of 300,000 forced an end to the participation of Portugal's float in the nine-teenth annual Azalea Festival parade honoring

NATO member-nations here today.

The anti-colonialist, anti-NATO demonstrators were mostly Black residents of Norfolk and students from the predominantly Black Norfolk State College, along with groups such as the Virginia Committee to Free Angela Davis, Virginia Youth Against War & Fascism, the Virginia Weekly newspaper, the American Servicemen's Union, SOUL, the Prisoners Solidarity Committee, and Sons and Daughters of Africa. The Black community here literally poured out onto the streets in an outraged protest against this NATO "festival" and Portugal's colonialist war against the people of Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau.

The parade was to be the highlight of the weeklong festival given in tribute to bigwigs who run the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Representatives from the NATO member nations had been in Norfolk for over a week in preparation for this occasion. (Norfolk is home for the Supreme Allied Command headquarters of NATO and is also a naval base for U.S. and NATO

warships.)

The so-called "azalea queen" for this year was 21-year-old Maria Teresa Sanchez, a daughter of the Portuguese Minister of Public Works and Communications, Ruis Sanchez, and grandniece of the Portuguese fascist government's premier, Marcello Caetano. Because of the militant mood of the predominantly Black crowd of more than 500, which stopped her float and greeted her and her police escort with rocks, bottles, and other handy objects, the "queen" was forced to abandon her float and drop out midway during the parade. The disruption of the parade had been preceded by a week of smaller demonstrations, leaflettings, rallies, and educational programs.

NATO OUT OF AFRICA!

The parade was launched this morning amid the chants and jeers from the 200 demonstrators who stood along the sidewalk and scored the U.S. military and NATO floats with the chants "Angela Davis Must Be Free," "Mozambique Will Be Free." Additional chants raised were "NATO Out of Norfolk," "Palestine Will Win," "U.S. Out of Vietnam—Portugal Out of Africa," and "Imperialism Is No Festival: U.S., Portugal, NATO—Out of Africa!"

The racist and militarist nature of the parade made it increasingly unpopular. The crowd grew larger and more militant as U.S. military bands, NATO vehicles and weapons, floats promoting recruitment to the U.S. army and navy, and floats dedicated to the fascist regimes of Greece, Tur-

key, and Spain went by.

Many floats bore confederate flags and there were whites on horseback doing racist caricatures of Native Americans while a Black man swept up the horses' feces from the pavement.

After all this, the people were fed up and waited with hardly concealed rage for the final float in the parade which bore the "azalea queen." In addition to the police who guarded the float, firemen and policemen were placed on roofs directly above the demonstrators. They had firehoses and clubs ready for possible use on the crowd. Police dogs had also been brought to the scene to terrorize the people. But the demonstrators were in no mood to be intimidated.

THE "QUEEN" ABDICATES

As the "queen" was rushed by in her float, the crowd surged forward, throwing whatever was available at this symbol of genocide against the African people. A siege of the float lasted several minutes as the symbol of Portugal's 500-year oppression of African people hid deep inside. "Finally," wrote one reporter from on the scene from the Virginia Weekly, "a police car reached the float and the 'queen' abdicated. Dethroned by the anger of the people, she was removed from the float shaken and in tears and taken to the safety of her motel room."

The arrogant and racist police launched a counterattack. Several Black youth carrying Black liberation flags were singled out for racist beatings by the swine (it's illegal to call swine pigs" in Virginia) and the police dogs were brought in to push the crowd back. Four people, one white and three Black, were seized and taken away. (Only one was subsequently charged. He is Samuel Winston, a student at Norfolk State who was busted for allegedly having "thrown a missile at a moving vehicle." He was subsequently released on the outrageous sum of \$10,000 bond for this misdemeanor.)

After a brief panic as the two-legged and fourlegged animals attacked, the people regrouped and armed themselves with sticks, bricks, and rocks, ready to take on the shaken and confused cops. In the face of this militancy, the frightened police backed off and allowed the rapidly growing crowd, by now about 1,000-strong, to march behind the now empty float toward the reviewing stand.

The float was forced to pass the reviewing stand empty, to the great embarrassment and anger of Norfolk officials and their imperialist guests. The spirit of the demonstration so pervaded the whole event that a band of students from predominantly Black Booker T. Washington High School, who had been forced to participate in the parade, refused to play for the "dignitaries" at the reviewing stand, laid down their instruments and left the march!



Political Prisoners

reflections:

The first black prisoners in Amerika were the Africans brought to these shores in chains in 1619. Like our brothers in prison today, and like ourselves our African ancestors were victims of the political, economic and military rapacity of white amerika's slave camps, reservations and concentration camps.

Black people cannot be protected by amerikan law, for we have no franchise in this country. If anything, if anything, we suffer double indemnity, we have no laws of our own and no protection from the laws of white amerika which by its intention and by the very nature of its cultural values which determined it, it is inimical to humanity.

In another sense of the word, we are out-laws. We are most subject to arrest, and the most frequent victims of crime. Well over 40% of the prison inmates in the state of California are black, and that goes for most prisons in this racist country: More blacks then whites are executed in the united states and this does not include lynchings, self-defense, or blatant murder by police. From 1930 to 1969 2,066 black people were executed compared to 175 whites:

Being outside the law, black people are either victims or else prisoners of a law which is neither enforced nor designed for us-except with repressive intent (for example, gun control legislation was enacted by the u.s. only after black people began buying guns and endorsing the principle of selfdefense). All black, poor and oppressed prison inmates are therefore political prisoners, for their conditions derives from the political inequity of black, poor and oppressed people in North Amerika. A black prisoners' crime may or may not have been a political action against the state, but the states criminal action against him has always been political. We must begin to understand that the black offender is not tried or judged by the black community itself, but by the machinery of the white community which is least affected by his action, and whose interests are served by the systematic subjugation of all black, poor and oppressed people. Thus the trial or conviction of a black prisoner regardless of his offense, his guilt or his innocence cannot be a democratic judgment of him by his peers, but rather a political action against him by his oppressors. Thus the matter of black prisoner and white law involves the basic question of self-determination for all black people. Black people must determine when a black man has violated the black community and the black , a community must take the corrective action.

As we strive for new political-economic and cultural institutions we must also create new legal institutions that will accurately reflect the judgement, the social fabric and the conditions of the black community. As it stands now, only the white community determines when a black person has offended the black community and this is a colonial imposition and a political injustice.

REMEMBER ATTICA

TEAR DOWN THE WALLS

FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS

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